

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 113
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 4405

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EFIN, PINT, PE
SUBJECT: SITUATION MAY 19

REF: LIMA 4352

1. SUMMARY: LIMA TENSE BUT GENERALLY BUSINESS AS USUAL
MAY 19. MANY PROVINCIAL CITIES ARE LARGELY SHUT DOWN
WITH POLICE OR ARMY IN THE STREETS; SCATTERED VIOLENCE
REPORTED WITH SEVERAL DEATHS CONFIRMED IN THE SMALL
TOWN OF CHEPEN. GENERAL STRIKE CALLED BY LEFTIST GROUPS
FOR MAY 22-23 AND GOVT'S WIL BE SUSPENDING GUARANTEES
AND PICKING UP STRIKE LEADERS OVER THE WEEK-END. WE
ANTICIPATE A HIGH DEGREE OF SUCCESS FOR THE STRIKE,
WITH CLOSING OF ALL AIRPORTS EXCEPT LIMA. GOV'T ANNOUNCED
2 WEEK POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTION FROM JUNE 4 TO JUNE 18.
MANY RUMORS ARE CIRCULATING THAT MORALES BERMUDEZ HAS
BEEN REPLACED BUT AS OF LATE MAY 19 THE GOV'T LEADERSHIP
IS HOLDING FIRMLY TOGETHER--BUT WITH GRUMBLING IN THE
RANKS--TO FACE GENERAL STRIKE MONDAY. END SUMMARY.

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2. SITUATION IN LIMA: TRAFFIC AND COMMERICAL ACITIVITY
MORE OR LESS NORMAL MAY 19, ALTHOUGH THERE WERE A FEW
ROCK THROWING INCIDENTS ON THE ROADS LAST NIGHT. HAYA
DE LA TORRE SPOKE TO SOME 20,000 APRA SYMPATHIZERS IN
CALLAO LAST NIGHT CALLING FOR UNITY AND DISCIPLINE DURING
HARD TIMES BUT NOT REPT NOT DIRECTLY ATTACKING THE GOP.
RUMORS SPREADING WILDLY IN LIMA MAY 19 ABOUT COUP IN

WHICH RICHTER PRADA HAS REPLACED PRESIDENT MORALES BERMUDEZ. IT APPEARS GROUPS OF OFFICERS, PRIMARILY IN THE MIDDLE RANKS, HAVE BEEN MEETING TO DISCUSS THE CURRENT SITUATION, AND SUBSTANTIAL GRUMBLING AND CRITICISM OF THE PRESIDENT ARE EVIDENT. HOWEVERN AS OF LATE AFTER-NOON MAY 19, THE GOP LEADERSHIP IS HOLDING FIRMLY TOGETHER GIRDLING THEMSELVES FOR THE GENRAL STRIKE MONDAY (SEE BELOW).

3. SITUATION IN THE PROVINCES: MOST PROVINCIAL CITIES REMAIN TENSE. AREQUIPA IS REALTIVELY CALM, BUT COMMERICAL AND TRANSPORT ACTIVITY IS STILL PARTIALLY PARALYZED AND TROOPS CONTINUE TO ASSIST POLICE IN MAINTAINING ORDER. IN CUZCO, THE MILITARY PRESENCE HAS PREVENTED ANY FURTHER DETERIORATION BUT PRIVATE TRAVEL, INCUDING TAXI SERVICD TO THE AIRPORT, IS BADLY DISRUPTED AND SOME TOURISTS ARE UNABLE T LEAVE. INTERNAL FLIGHTS ARE OPERATING BUT WITH CONSIDERABLE DELAYS AND CUTBACKS. THE TRAINS TO MACHU PICCHU AND FROM CUZCO TO PUNO HAVE STOPPED RUNNING AND WE HAVE HEARD NEW REPORTS OF VIOLENCE I PUNO. THE SITUATION HAS DETERIORATED IN THE NORTH. SERIOUS VIOLENCE BROKE OUT YESTERDAY IN CHEPEN, BETWEEN TRUJILLO AND CHICLAYO, WHERE RIOTERS BRIEFLY TOOK CONTROL OF THE TOWN; TROOPS LATER REGAINED CONTROL, BUT WITH FOUR DEATHS REPORTE. VIOLENCE INCLUDING SOME INJURIES, ALSO REPORTED IN CHICLAYO AND JAYANCA. CONFIDENTIAL

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TRAFFIC ALONG NORTHERN SECTORS OF THE PANAMERICAN HIGHWAY HAS BEEN INTERRUPTED AND THERE ARE REPORTS OF BRIDGES BLOCKED AND ROCK THROWING PROTESTORS. IN THE SOUTHERN CITY OF ICA WE HAVE CONFIRMATION OF ONE DEATH IN YESTERDAY'S DISTURBANCES.

4. GENERAL STRIKE CALL: A NUMBER OF LEFT-WING LABOR ORGANIZATION ARE FINALIZING AND COORDINATING PLANS FOR A NATIONWIDE GENRAL STRIKE VIRTUALLY CERTAIN TO TAKE PLACE ON MONDAY AND TUESDAY, MAY 22-23. DEMANDS INCLUDE A 100 PERCENT WAGE INCREASE, ROOLBACK OF GASOLINE PRICES, AND A RESTORATION OF SUBSIDIES ON FOODSTUFFS. THE CGTP AFFILIATES(INCLUDING THE BANKWORKERS), THE FEDERATION OF TRANSPORT WORKERS, THE CAMPESINO ORGANIZATION (CNA) AND APPARENTLY ALL NON-AFFILIATED FEDERATION OR UNIONS IDEOLOGICALLY LEFT OF THE CGTP SUPPORT THE STRIKE. AMONG POLITICAL PARTIES, THE MOSCOW LINE PCP, RODRIGUEZ FIGUEROAS' PSR, ULTRA LEFT FOCEP AND UDP HAVE ALL MADE PUBLIC STATEMENTS INDORSING THE STRIKE. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, NONE OF THE MAJOR PARTIES NOR THE LEFTIST CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT PARTY (PDC) HAS COMMENTED ON THE STRIKE. THE GOVERNMENT CREATED CTRP AND APRA-RELATED CTP HAVE ISSUED COMMUNIQES

REJECTING THE STRIKE. THE CTP WARNED AFFILIATES THAT CLAIMS ORIGINATING OUTSIDE OF LIMA OF CTP SUPPORT FOR THE STRIKE ARE FALSE. (OUR LASTEST INFORMATION IS THAT CTP IS STILL STUDYING THE SITUATION ON AN URGENT BASIS).

5. GOP PLANS: THE GOP HAS ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE STATING THAT THE STRIKE IS "IMPROCEDENTE" I.E. SHOULD NOT REPT NOT TAKE PLACE. THE GOVERNMENT IS ALSO PLANNING TO SUSPEND GUARANTEES (PROBABLY INCLUDING IMPOSITION OF CURFEW) LATE EVENING OF MAY 19 AND TO PUT TROOPS INTO THE STREETS ON MONDAY AND TUESDAY. GOP SECURITY FORCES HAVE ALREADY STARTED PREEMPTIVE ARRESTS OF LEFTIST LABOR AND POLITICAL LEADERS, INCLUDING CANDIDATES TO THE CONSITITUENT ASSEMBLY.

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6. ELECTIONS POSTPONED 2 WEEKS: THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (JNE) MAY 18 ASKED FOR AND RECEIVED FROM THE GOP PERMISSION TO DELAY THE JUNE 4 CONSITUTENT ASSEMBLY ELECTION UNTIL JUNE 18. THE REASONS GIVEN FOR THE 2 WEEK POSTPONEMENT WERE (1) TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES AND DELAYS IN SETTING UP THE COMPLICATED ELECTORAL MACHINERY THROUGH OUT THE COUNTRY, (2) THE FACT THAT THE POSTPONMENT WOULD STILL ALLOW SUFFICIENT TIME TO INSTALL THE ASSEMBLY ON JULY 28 AS SCHEDULED, (3) PROBLEMS IN THE PROVINCES AS A RESULT OF RIOTS AND STRIKES IN CONNECTIN WITH THE MAY 14, ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW AUSTERITY MEASURES (IN INGO MARIA, FOR INSTANCE, A MOB BURNED THE OFFICE OF LOCAL ELECTION OFFICIALS), AND (4) REQUESTS BY TWO POLITICAL PARTIES, UNO AND FNTC, FOR A DELAY AND PUBLIC ASSURANCES BY OTHER PARTY LEADERS THAT A DELAY PROVIDED IT WAS BREIF, WOULD NOT SERIOUSLY IMPRING UPON THE ELECTORAL PROCESS. PPC AND APRA LEADERS HAVE INDICATED THAT THIS DELAY DOES NOT REPT NOT SEEM TO MEANCE THE ELECTORAL PROCESS AND THAT THE REASONS FOR THE DEALY ADVANCED BY THE JNE APPEAR PLAUSIBLE.

7. COMMENT: THE GENRAL STRIKE WILL LIKELY ATTRACT BROAD SUPPORT IN VIEW OF THE GENERAL DISCONTENT WITH THE NEW AUSTERITY MEASURES. TRANSPORTATION WORKERS WILL ALMOST ALL EITHER BE ON STRIKE OR STAY HOME TO AVOID TROUBLE. AIRPORT AUTHORITIES TELL US ALL AIRPORTS ARE LIKELY TO BE CLOSED EXCEPT LIMA, WHICH PROBABLY WILL REMAIN OPEN. WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY ADVISED TO DISCOURAGE OFFICIAL AND TOURIST TRAVEL DURING THE STRIKE (LIMA 4368). PREEG

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